

30th March 2021

European Integrate Network input to the public consultation process on the new EU Forest Strategy

prepared by the Integrate Network member countries under the current Chairmanship

The European Network Integrate focusses on integrated forest management as a means for combining the provision of several ecosystem services in one forest landscape. Initiated in 2016 on the base of [Prague Declaration](#) and formally established as a Member-State-driven initiative under the EU Forest Strategy in 2017, the network is presently composed of 18 member countries from EU and from outside EU, with representatives from forest management and nature conservation, policy and practice, with the European Commission being an observer. Integrate member countries participate on a voluntary basis and operate on the base of [the Terms of Reference](#).

Based on the joint collaborative work in the Integrate Network and reflecting ongoing processes within the network, the member countries (Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, England, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Ireland, Luxembourg, Poland, Slovenia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland – the current Integrate Network Chair) prepared a joint input to the public consultation process on the new EU Forest Strategy.

Any statement in the document is to be considered as a reflection of the best available professional expertise and does not necessarily reflect the political commitments of individual member states.

The network recommends the European Commission and European policy makers to take the following considerations into account during the preparation of the EU Forest Strategy:

- 1. Recognise that European forests are characterized by a long history of human influence and a wide diversity of forests types, which creates the rationale for site adapted forest management concepts. The EU forest related policy framework needs to support this site adapted further development of management concepts.**
- 2. Recognize that (as stated in the Integrate Network Teams of Reference) integrated forest management approaches are a key strategy to further integrate nature conservation objectives into the practical implementation of Sustainable Forest Management (SFM). Therefore, we highlight that the promotion of integrated approach in the European forests serves both the bioeconomy and biodiversity and should be a core, long-term ambition to be included in the new EU Forest Strategy.**
- 3. Acknowledge that forests fulfil critical environmental, social, and economic functions, responding to several social expectations and political goals. Balancing requirements for forests and their management and reconcile forest-related goals and policies while protecting their multifunctional nature and integrating forest functions, needs to be at the core of the EU forest related policy framework and the EU Forest Strategy.**

4. **Acknowledge that integrated forest management, referring to the provision of multiple societal demands and the integration of biodiversity conservation in particular, offers the great opportunity to enhance biodiversity and other services of managed forests in Europe.**
5. **Acknowledge that integrated forest management in Europe has huge potential to avoid leakage effects, as sustainably produced wood from European forests can decrease the pressure on forests globally.**
6. **Consider integrated forest management approaches as core objectives of future European and international forest related policies and strategies, like the new EU Forest Strategy, enhancing (bio-) economy, biodiversity, and social needs, and develop instruments that effectively support implementation including management of trade-offs.**
7. **Strengthen the implementation of integrated forest management, which combines an active management approach and adaptation to climate change with elements of natural forest dynamics, in order to increase genetic, species and ecosystem diversity of European forests so they can best cope with climate change and continue to provide the many expected forest ecosystem services.**
8. **Advance through integrated forest management, the structural diversity of forests including features of old-growth forests structures, dead wood, tree related microhabitats, and creation of gaps as important objectives in sustainable forest management.**
9. **Improve through integrated forest management the resilience of forests by diversifying forest composition and structures to better adapt to climate change and corresponding climate change-induced biotic and abiotic pressures such as fires, droughts and storms, bark beetle outbreaks, and invasive alien species.**
10. **Advance integrated forest management by building on and enhancing the uptake of lessons learnt and sharing good practice examples from the European Network Integrate in order to step up practical implementation of the concept through the EU forest related policies framework including inter alia Biodiversity Strategy, Common Agriculture Policy, sustainable finance policies, climate policies and energy policies.**
11. **Advance integrated forest management, by supporting European's forest owners, public forest service, and managers in their motivation to advance pragmatic and regionally rooted integrated forest management approaches, while promoting further education, training and sharing of knowledge.**
12. **Advance integrated forest management, by involving stakeholders with different views in the goals' setting for integrated forest management, as the society increasingly demands to integrate conservation objectives in forest management.**
13. **Advance integrated forest management, by investing in the science-policy-practice interface, including demonstration sites (Marteloscopes), to enhance mutual learning on integrated forest management approaches that address conservation and protection objectives as an integral part.**
